DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 836 CS 010 394

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TITLE The Philosophical Arena and Reading.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Philosophy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Existentialism; *Platonism; *Reading Instruction; Reading Programs; *Realism
IDENTIFIERS *Experimentalism; *Reading Motivation

ABSTRACT

Each plan for guiding pupils to read emphasizes an inherent philosophy or philosophies of education. Existentialism encourages reading by promoting free choice of reading material and relating decisions to results. A reading curriculum based on the tenets of realism would give the learner a view of the world as it actually exists. Experimentalism has much to offer in developing a functional reading curriculum. As such, a person can experience, but not know, reality as it truly exists. Idealists, on the other hand, believe that ideas represent ultimate reality in life. Because obtaining universal content through intellectual endeavors is the goal of the idealist, the duty of the learner is to move in the direction of the "Universal Ideal" or "Infinite Mind." Each of these philosophies can contribute to reading instruction. In any case, each student needs to attain optimally in the reading curriculum as well as in society. (SG)

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THE PHILOSOPHICAL ARENA AND READING

There are numerous methods to utilize in the teaching of reading. A highly structured procedure in reading instruction might well pertain to the teacher selecting measurably stated objectives for pupils to attain. The teacher may also determine each sequential learning activity for pupils to accomplish the desired ends. After instruction, the instructor evaluates if a pupil has/has not reached the seqential predetermined objectives.

A rather flexible method of teaching reading could pertain to the child choosing which library books to read in a desired sequence/order. After completing the reading of a library book, the involved pupil may also select methods of appraisal to reveal appreciations, comprehension, and general achievement.

Each plan of guiding pupils to read emphasizes an inherent philosophy of philosophies of education. How night a study of diverse philosophies of education assist teachers, principals, and supervisors to make curricular decisions in the teaching of reading?

Existentialism and Teaching of Reading

Existentialism as a philosophy of education emphasizes the following in the curriculum of life:

1. The present moment/time is vital for each learner. Choices and decisions need to be made by the involved individual.
2. Many of these choices involve dilemma situations. In a free environment, authentic choices must be made by pupils.

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Coercion in the making of choices is definitely not a part of existentialist thinking.

3. Moral choices made on an individual basis may end in positive feelings, as well as in feelings of alienation. Decisions may well need to be made in an absurd/ridiculous world.
4. The consequences of an act/deed need to be considered by each chooser or decision maker.
5. Each human being is definitely responsible for choices made. The buck stops with the involved individual. Other persons, individually or collectively, are not responsible for the consequences of the engaged person's decisions.
6. Since each person chooses in a completely non-authoritarian environment, knowledge, values, and beliefs are subjective to the chooser.

Which implications from a study of existentialism as a philosphy of education might be inherent for a recommended reading curriculum?

1. Pupils need to choose freely which library/trade books to read. Content in these reading materials should pertain to dilemma situations in the curriculum of life. Thus, people on an individual basis make selections and accept responsibility for sequential consequences. Moral commitment needs to be involved in the decision making arena. Tension, dread, and anxiety are inherent in making choices within the framework of an ambivalent arena in content read by pupils.
2. Pupils voluntarily need to relate which personal decisions made ended in acceptable results, as well as those ending in feelings of loneliness. Content read from library books needs to be appraised by pupils in terms of authenticity of choices made by human beings. Should other choices have been made which would have increasingly emphasized the concept of morality? Can moral decisions be objectified or are these kinds of decisions always subjective to the involved chooser?
3. Learners may wish to reflect understandings and attitudes gained from reading through the development and completion of diverse art projects. These products in art should reveal subjective, personal feelings of the pupil artist.

Pertaining to exsistentialism, Ozman and Craver[1] wrote:

> Because the individual human is so important as the creator of ideas, existentialists maintain that education should focus upon individual human reality. It should deal with the individual as a unique being in the world, not only as a creator of ideas, but as a living, feeling being. Most

philosophies, ..., existentialists charge, tend to focus on the individual only as a cognitive being. The individual is this, but he is also a feeling, aware person, and existentialists think that this side deserves attention.

Realism and the Teaching of Reading

Ultimate reality for a realist pertains to knowing the natural/ social environment as it truly is or exists in whole or in part. To receive a good education, in particular, a learner should continually obtain an exact duplicate of the real world. Science and mathematics as two curriculum areas, no doubt, would receive top priority in the school/class environment. Science and mathematics contain exact, precise content which may be known accurately by the involved pupil. Additional tenets emphasized by realists in the school curriculum and in the curriculum of life may well include the following:

1. Precise ends should be chosen by the teacher for learners to attain. Also, the teacher needs to determine pupil activities to achieve the desired objectives, as well as evaluation/ measurement procedures to ascertain achievement. Whatever exists in the real world is measurable. A needs assessment program may aid teachers in determining vital objectives in the reading curriculum.
2. Reading materials for pupils, of course, should contain content dealing with the real world. The diverse academic disciplines, science and mathematics in particular, may provide excellent reading materials for pupils. Reading is a method of acquiring content pertaining to knowing the natural/ social environment in whole or in part.
3. Reputable research studies pertaining to which words pupils need to master on each achievement level might well provide an excellent framework for teaching and learning in the reading curriculum. Frequency of word usage in reading and spelling research studies might objectify words pupils need to master in reading.
4. A variety of audio-visual aids, including the utilization of models and excursions should assist pupils to objectify the natural/social environment as it actually is. The utilization of these audio-visual presentations should assist pupils to

develop readiness for reading and thus attach precise meanings to the printed page.

5. Personal opinion and fantasy have little/no importance in a realist curriculum. Objective content rather is relevant. Objectivity here refers to seeing and knowing the real world as it is. Endless learnings then are needed by the learner to understand/know reality using empirical means of inquiry. In addition to science and mathematics, social studies, health, art, music, and physical education might also contribute content which has stood the test of time in terms of being objectified. Thus, for example, a pupil may paint/draw a picture of a set of roses in their actual appearance to reveal reading comprehension. Even in the values arena, there are selected ideals which have stood the test of time and might be emphasized in a realist curriculum. Each previously listed curriculum area may provide content for pupils in the reading curriculum. The content, however, must be objective, not subjective, in terms of being opinions or fantasy.

Pertaining to realism, Wild[2] wrote:

> The child, of course, should be interested in what he is learning. But it does not follow that whatever the child is interested in is, therefore, valuable. This is absurd. The skill of the elementary teacher lies in eliciting the interest of the child in the right things, especially in grasping the truth for its own sake. At the early stages no psychological or rhetorical technique should be neglected which is capable of strengthening this urge. When a mathematical principle has been understood, the child's attention should be drawn at once to the problems this enables him to solve. No opportunity should be lost to point out the principles of pure science which underlie modern technology. Language and grammar should be taught as essential phases of that mysterious process of apprehension by which the actual structure of things is mentally reflected and expressed, and by which such knowledge is achieved.

Experimentalism and the Teaching of Reading

Experimentalism, as a philosophy of education, has much to offer in developing a <u>functional</u> reading curriculum. Experimentalism emphasizes <u>experience</u> as representing ultimate reality. Thus, a person can experience, but <u>not</u> know reality as it truly exists. Solving problems

represents the world of experience for pupils. These problem areas should be realistic and life-like. That which is vital in society then should not be separable from what is relevant in the school/class setting. The school curriculum can be represented in terms of being a miniature society. In society significant problems are identified and viable solutions developed by committees and the larger society. Relevant problem areas also need to be selected and solved in the school arena within a committee/group framework. Learners must do the selecting of problems with teacher guidance. Purpose is then involved in learning. Interest in learning therefore may then be in evidence to propel effort in the learning arena. Interest and effort are integrated entities.

Implications from experimentalism as a philosophy of education for the reading curriculum might well be the following:

1. Pupils with teacher leadership in a stimulating environment need to choose purposeful problems to solve. One method, among others to use in gathering needed information as possible tentative solutions to problem areas, can well be reading. Reading materials need to be on diverse levels of achievement to provide adequately for each involved learner. A variety of materials also needs to be in evidence in reading to solve problems, e.g. basal texts, encyclopedias, library/trade books, pamphlets, brochures, and printed content on filmstrips.
2. Reading, as a whole, should be inherent in and not outside the framework of problem solving. These problems should be realistic in that they are part of the school/society environment. Adequate opportunities need to be given to pupils to work cooperatively in the problem solving arena. Pupil's intrinsic interests in reading are necessary if effort is to be in evidence in learning.

John Dewey[3] wrote:

> Since education is a social process, and there are many kinds of societies, a criterion for educational criticism and

> construction implies a particular social ideal. The two points selected by which to measure the worth of a form of social life are the extent in which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups. An undesirable society, in other words, is one which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience. A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder.

Idealism and the Teaching of Reading

Idealists believe that ideas represent ultimate reality in life. One cannot know the real world as it is, but ideas about the natural/social environment are obtainable. Idealists emphasize the importance of the learner obtaining universal content through intellectual endeavors. Mind is real and needs encouragement and stimulation. What is applicable in specific situations, of course, is not as vital to idealists as compared to that which has universal application in terms of character development. A learner, never discovers nor realizes, by any means, the many universal ideas in one life time. However, the <u>will</u> of the individual has a duty to move in the direction of the Universal Ideal or the Infinite Mind. General education, also called liberal education, assists each learner to move from the finite or limited being to the <u>Infinite</u>.

Implications from Idealism as a philosophy of education for the reading curriculum might well include the following:

1. Pupils need to read content containing universal ideas. Thus, for example, concepts and generalizations pertaining to the Golden Rule would be very vital. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" has stood the test of time and place in terms of being a universal ethic. The Golden Rule and other universal ideas need to be discovered by pupils. These universals give guidance and direction to learners, as well as teachers and supervisors in relating effectively to others. Reading materials for learners then need to contain universal ethics and criteria which stress truth, goodness, and beauty.
2. Pupils with teacher guidance may evaluate content in basal literature textbooks pertaining to involved individuals/groups using or not using Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) Categorical Imperative-to use others not as a means to an end (e.g. as stepping stones) but rather individuals are ends in and of themselves.
3. Pupils need to read library/trade books on an individual basis. The inherent content may be appraised if it contains or does not contain universal content in the ethics/aesthetics arena.

Pertaining to idealism, Bowyer[4] wrote:

> Idealism--regardless of the particular type--is a system of thought which regards reality as essentially spiritual or as the embodiment of mind or reason. Thus reality is identified with perceptibility, the basic interpretive principle is ideal, and the mental is the only knowable life. Idealism is the alternative to materialism. Unlike materialism, idealism emphasized the supra or nonspatial, the incorporeal, and the nonsensuous. Most idealists believe that the natural world is only the appearance of reality which is authored by thought. The view emphasizes the person or the self, and idealists believe that the existence of the world and individual selves depends upon a Self who is Creator and Sustainer. There are many philosophers who reject the idealist position because it tends to ignore the world as it is sensed and because it leads one to the security of an absolute. Among the critics of idealism are those who call themselves realists. These are followers of a belief that is in some respect a lineal descendant of naturalism.

In Summary

A study of the philosophy of education has relevant implications in developing the reading curriculum. Each philosophy of education -- existentialism, realism, experimentalism, and idealism -- has much to

contribute to achieve a viable program of reading instruction. A reading curriculum may, of course, change much as the adopted philosophy changes. Each student needs to attain optimally in the reading curriculum as well as in society.

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3. Dewey, John. Democracy and Education. New York: Macmillan Company, 1961, page 99.

4. Bowyer, Carlton H. Philosophical Perspectives for Education. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1970, pages 16-17.